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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001388

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/INS, SA/RA
LONDON FOR POL/GURNEY, NSC FOR MILLARD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOISTS ISSUE PRE-CONDITIONS FOR RESUMPTION
OF TALKS

Classified By: Ambassador Michael E. Malinowski for reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary. On July 23, the Maoist leadership publicly released a letter responding to the Government of Nepal's invitation to resume formal peace negotiations stalled since early May. Blaming the GON for violations of the cease-fire code of conduct, the letter represents another effort to turn public opinion against King Gyanendra's government and against "foreign powers", specifically the United States. In the letter, the Maoists set unrealistic pre-conditions for the resumption of peace talks. Post believes this is a continuation of the Maoist strategy of insisting on concessions from the GON without having to negotiate. The letter also provided thinly-veiled threats that if the pre-conditions are not met, the Maoists will re-initiate its campaign of violence and terror. The GON negotiating team has indicated that it would respond as calmly and quickly as possible, but that the demands will be difficult to satisfy. However, the RNA reportedly has put its forces on heightened alert in anticipation of renewed violence. In sum, by making unrealistic demands, the Maoists have brought the cease-fire one step closer to collapse. End Summary.

The Maoists' Demands

2. (C) On July 23, the Maoist leadership issued a letter signed by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai to Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa outlining the conditions the Government of Nepal must meet before formal negotiations can resume. Specifically, the Maoist letter:

-- (a) Demands that the agreements allegedly reached at the second round of talks in May must be implemented before peace negotiations can resume. The insurgents claim that the GON had agreed to limit the Royal Nepal Army to within 5 kilometers of its barracks, release three Maoist leaders from prison, and make public the whereabouts of missing Maoist activists. The GON, however, has denied reaching agreement on limiting the RNA's movements and, in any case, the RNA has flatly refused to comply with such a request as it would give the Maoists an enormous tactical advantage should hostilities resume. The letter also claimed that although "all district headquarters and large cities" were under RNA control, "the rest of the villages and rural areas were under the control of the Liberation Army." As a result, the Maoists state that they will regard any RNA or police patrol outside urban areas to be a violation of the cease-fire code of conduct.

-- (b) Complains that without executive authority, the negotiating team is useless and, therefore, the King must accord the team full authority before talks can resume.

-- (c) Demands that the King and political parties must reconcile their differences prior to re-initiating negotiations.

-- (d) Claims that the RNA has "invited hundreds of U.S. military experts and advisors into the country," thereby disrupting the peace process. The letter also refers to the RNA as a "foreign puppet military" and likens the Maoist insurgency to the 1960s war in Vietnam.

Government Reaction

3. (C) On July 23, Kamal Thapa, Minister of Information and member of the GON negotiating team expressed concern to the Ambassador about the letter's contents, describing it overall as "negative." The local press reports that Thapa felt the Maoists' pre-conditions are "very tough" and would cause a delay in the resumption of peace talks. Thapa noted to the Ambassador that the Maoists had also focused attention on the U.S. military in Nepal. He commented that the GON would respond as calmly and quickly as possible, perhaps as soon as July 24 or 25. Other sources indicate that the GON already has solicited recommendations from RNA and National Police leaders. Senior police officers reportedly suggested that the GON response should focus on Maoist violations of the cease-fire rather than directly addressing the insurgents' unrealistic demands.

14. (C) Separately, the Chief of Army Staff Pyar Jung Thapa also expressed concern over the Maoists' intentions and confided to the Ambassador that he had raised the Army's alert level. Press reports indicate that all RNA soldiers on leave have been recalled in anticipation of renewed violence.

15. (C) Indian Ambassador Saran expressed less concern to the Ambassador over the letter, seeing it as a likely tactic to gain concessions and not necessarily a prelude to terminating the talks. He claimed to have some information from Maoist sources indicating that the Maoists wanted the talks to continue.

Comment

16. (C) The Maoist response to Prime Minister Thapa's invitation to peace talks represents a continuation of their strategy of extracting concessions from the GON without entering into formal negotiations. By all indications, the Maoist leadership correctly perceive the more organized and structured approach to negotiations of the Thapa government as less susceptible to their intimidation and manipulation. By setting unrealistic pre-conditions for the resumption of talks, the Maoists have set up the peace process for failure. Maoist accusations that the GON is "continuously" violating the code of conduct are a transparent effort to shift blame for a break in the cease-fire to the RNA and National Police. In fact, Post's assessment is that the Maoists have been much more guilty of cease-fire violations than Nepal's security forces.

17. (C) Maoist rhetoric against the U.S., while nothing new, appeals to Nepali nationalism and politicizes U.S. military assistance to Nepal, increasing pressure on the GON to refuse such assistance. The Maoist effort to end U.S. military training is further proof that they see our assistance as a threat to their political and military objectives. In sum, while the Maoists may be playing some type of brinkmanship game to extract concessions, in doing so they have brought the cease-fire one step closer to collapse. End Comment.
MALINOWSKI